

U.S. Department of Education
2011 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School

School Type (Public Schools): ☒ Charter ☒ Title 1 ☐ Magnet ☒ Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. Justin Fuentes

Official School Name: Challenge Early College High School

School Mailing Address: 5601 W Loop South
Houston, TX 77081-2221

County: Harris State School Code Number: 101912323

Telephone: (713) 664-9712 E-mail: jfuentes@houstonisd.org

Fax: (713) 664-9780 Web URL: <http://www.challengehs.org/>

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Terry Grier Superintendent e-mail: tgrier@houstonisd.orgDistrict Name: Houston Independent School District District Phone: (713) 556-6005

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Greg Myers

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

11TX15

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2010-2011 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2005.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 or 2010.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

11TX15

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district: 182 Elementary schools
(per district designation) 50 Middle/Junior high schools
49 High schools
15 K-12 schools
296 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 8021

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Urban or large central city
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2010 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		6	0	0	0
K	0	0	0		7	0	0	0
1	0	0	0		8	0	0	0
2	0	0	0		9	52	63	115
3	0	0	0		10	51	73	124
4	0	0	0		11	48	67	115
5	0	0	0		12	44	46	90
Total in Applying School:								444

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
4 % Asian
17 % Black or African American
61 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
15 % White
3 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2009-2010 school year: 2%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred to the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred from the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	11
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	11
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2009	446
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.02
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	2

8. Percent limited English proficient students in the school: 0%

Total number of limited English proficient students in the school: 0

Number of languages represented, not including English: 0

Specify languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50%
 Total number of students who qualify: 222

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 1%
 Total number of students served: 3

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>1</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>20</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>32</u>	<u>1</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 19:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only high schools need to supply graduation rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any student or teacher attendance rates under 95% and teacher turnover rates over 12% and fluctuations in graduation rates.

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	95%	95%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	99%	98%	98%	97%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	10%	10%	10%	15%	17%
High school graduation rate	99%	99%	96%	93%	92%

If these data are not available, explain and provide reasonable estimates.

In school years 2006-2007 and 2005-2006 we lost three teachers per year out of a possible twenty and eighteen respectively. Each year at least one of those teachers was lost due to promotion, the others due to family moving out of town.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools): Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2010 are doing as of Fall 2010.

Graduating class size:	<u>103</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>59%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>19%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>1%</u>
Found employment	<u>21%</u>
Military service	<u>0%</u>
Other	<u>0%</u>
Total	<u>100%</u>

The mission of Challenge Early College High School (CECHS) is to graduate confident, ethically responsible, lifelong learners who are prepared to succeed in higher education and be productive citizens in our world. The mission is achieved through a focus on Harvard researcher Tony Wagner's three R's—Relationships, Relevance, and Rigor—which has served as a framework since the school's founding in 2003.

A high-quality education at CECHS is founded on relationships. One of the major strengths of this school is its small size. We personalize each student's education by supporting the development of meaningful, sustained relationships among teachers and students. In study after study of successful small high schools, students compare their school to a family rather than a factory and link their academic achievement to caring relationships with teachers. CECHS offers smaller classes for students and reduced pupil loads for teachers, so that the young people and the adults in the school are well known to each other.

The educational cliché “students don't care what you know, unless they know that you care” also drives our mission. With the use of senior students as facilitators in our Advisory program, the employment of a full-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and the current 19:1 student-teacher ratio in our high school classes, we strive to provide each student the opportunity to be heard and, more importantly, listened to.

Students at CECHS are those that the Gates Foundation Early College Initiative strives to support, those who might otherwise not attain or even dream of going to college. The majority of our students are “first-generation college goers” and do not have the fiscal resources for continued education. They are participants in the National Free and Reduced Lunch program, members of single family households, and represent a truly diverse ethnic population.

CECHS provides high school-age students a “seamless” pathway between high school and college. Housed on a Houston Community College System (HCCS) campus with articulated sharing of space and staff, CECHS allows the high school student to gradually integrate into college course work through the traditional high school degree plan. This integration requires dual enrollment and successful placement on the Compass test. Upon successful completion of the Houston Independent School District (HISD) requirements for graduation, the students may elect to leave CECHS for higher education or choose to withhold some requirements and remain at CECHS for an additional year to complete their Associate's Degree. Students who graduate from CECHS will potentially have not only a Texas Scholar (honor's) diploma, but also have accumulated 61 college credits or more.

In its eight years of existence, CECHS has been able to establish a culture where student success is celebrated at many levels—from AP achievement to participation in one of the many programs. Programs include Advisory, Student Leadership, Guidance Class, school-wide book selection, school-wide “Relax before TAKS” field trip, campus-wide volunteer opportunities, Fish Camp (Freshman Summer Bridge), town hall meetings, and senior week. All are part of the effort to build the culture and accomplish the mission.

CECHS has reached many milestones that define what a great college-readiness program should include. In regard to Texas standards, the state's top rating of Exemplary has been achieved for the past two years. CECHS has supported the achievements of a number of students who have earned recognition from National Merit Scholarship as Commended, Semi-Finalists and Finalists and several students who have enrolled into Ivy League schools in the 2010 academic year, as well as one-third of our students achieving Associate's Degrees annually.

In addition to the focus on our students, CECHS provides a high caliber professional staff to make all of this possible. Seventy percent of our teachers hold advanced degrees, 80% have six or more years of

experience with an overall average of 12 years, and 90% have been trained with Pre-AP and AP curriculum. Successful structures in our school include vertical and horizontal teaming structures, teacher- and student- led tutorials, and a delineated plan of support for students and families in need (the Academic Student Support and Intervention System Teaming-ASSIST).

CECHS recognitions and accomplishments include:

- US News and World Report – Silver and Bronze Medals
- Ranking of #8 amongst all Houston high schools by the organization Children At Risk
- Texas Education Agency top rating of Exemplary
- Newsweek's top high schools
- Houston Independent School District – Secondary Teacher of the Year
- National Blue Ribbon Nominee

It is through relationships that students gain the confidence to risk and thus build academic and social achievement. In the face of a national focus that measures achievement based on standardized tests, CECHS has maintained a focus on the whole student. This attention to the 3 R's results in high achievement on those instruments, and supports our students' affective development for success in college and beyond.

1. Assessment Results:

Challenge Early College High School (CECHS) is an internal charter school with the Houston Independent School District (HISD). CECHS's data comes primarily from the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and can be accessed from the following web site: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/>. The school profile, containing similar information, can be found at:

<http://dept.houstonisd.org/profiles/ChallengeHS.pdf>. The data includes information from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), student attendance, and high school completion rates. The TAKS test assesses student knowledge of the state content standards and is administered beginning in 3rd grade. On the high school campus ninth grade students are assessed in reading and math; 10th and 11th grade students in English language arts, math, science, and social studies.

A scaled score of 2100 is required to pass and 2400 is required to earn "commended" status for an individual student. Federal accountability is based on data taken from the 10th grade level and exit level TAKS (graduation criteria) is based on the 11th grade data—students must be successful on all four parts of the test.

Based on this data, the school or district will receive one of four rankings: Exemplary (highest), Recognized, Academically Acceptable, and Academically Unacceptable (lowest).

To receive an Exemplary rating, a school/district must meet all four of the following criteria:

- TAKS (TM) Test Passing - At least 90 percent of all students must meet standards overall and on each of five subsections; in addition, each subgroup must also meet the same 90 percent criterion
 - SDAA II Test Passing - At least 90 percent of all students must pass the State-Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II) test, which is required for only those students for whom the TAKS test is not an acceptable measurement (subgroup criterion does not apply)
 - Completion Rate - At least 95 percent of all students, as well as 95 percent of each subgroup, must either have completed or are continuing their education four years after entering high school
 - Dropout Rate - No more than 0.2 percent of all students and subgroups can have dropped out of school.
- In order to receive a Recognized rating, the criteria is 75% pass rate, 85 percent Completion Rate, and 0.7 percent Dropout Rate. Below this criteria are ratings of Academically Acceptable and Academically Unacceptable.

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 school years, CECHS's TEA rating was Recognized and in 2009 and 2010 rose to Exemplary. CECHS has also met the Adequate Yearly Progress in four of the five years. The year AYP was missed was due only to non-submission of the state waiver for the Early Colleges whose program offers a fifth year.

According to TAKS data for the past five years, CECHS student performance levels for all students have exceeded state and district performance in the area of Reading/ELA and math. All subgroups (African American, Hispanic, White, Asian, and Economically Disadvantaged) have exceeded the state and district performance levels in Reading/ELA for the past five years while performance levels in math exceeded district levels, and in all but two subgroups (Asian and African American) exceeded state performance levels for the past five years.

Those two exceptions were as follows:

- In 2005-2006, the performance level for Asian students in math was the same as the state's performance level. In the subsequent year (2006-2007), a significant gain of 18% for Asian students in math exceeded the state's by 16%.
- In 2006-2007, the performance level for African American students in math was at 76% while the state's performance was 77%. Once again, in the subsequent year (2007-2008), a significant gain of 11% for African American students in math exceeded the state's gain by 7%.

For the past five years, Reading/ELA mastery levels have been above 90% for all students and all subgroups and in the past three years above 95%. With the exception of the 2006-2007 school year, math mastery levels have been consistently increasing with scores above 85% for all students and subgroups.

Since the 2005-2006 school year, another significant gain for CECHS is the state's Gold Performance Acknowledgements (GPA). The Gold Performance system acknowledges districts and campuses for high performance on 14 additional performance standards and indicators, including attendance, advanced course completion and performance on specific sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). In the last five years, CECHS has been noted for 11 of the 14 indicators. In 2005-2006, CECHS Gold Performance Acknowledgements included Attendance, Advanced Academic Courses, Recommended High School Program, Texas Success Initiative for ELA and Math, Commended on Social Studies, and Comparable Improvement in Reading/ELA. In subsequent years, AP/IB Results, College Admissions, Comparable Improvement in Math, College-Ready Graduates, and Commended on Reading/ELA were all added to the list of Gold Performance Acknowledgements for CECHS.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Data is used to inform instruction, differentiate, and personalize learning based on individual student needs. TAKS and Lexile scores provide a performance baseline and are distributed at the beginning of the year so departments can differentiate for specific students. Additional data results, including PSAT results, AP scores, Pre-AP Laying the Foundation results, and Compass testing, serve as college readiness indicators. Each core content area shares a common planning period to engage in vertical teaming through the examination of three-week unit plans, student assessment results, classroom strategies, and intervention plans.

Each year Texas mandates the formation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP) which incorporates the use of SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, & Timely) Goals. Our SIP generally includes three SMART Goals which are developed by the Principal and Administrative Team after inspection of a multitude of data sources. When presented to our staff, each of our teachers creates their own Independent Professional Development Plan for the given year which includes personal-professional SMART Goals. The other two major areas affected by our inspection of data include the creation of our master schedule and distinct Personal Graduation Plans (PGP) for each student.

When data presented by the National Student Clearinghouse and graduate surveys reflected lower numbers than desired, we created Guidance classes for 11th and 12th grade students. The Guidance class is a support class for college classes, PSAT/SAT/ACT objectives, college applications, scholarships, and the FAFSA. In response to lackluster achievement data in the dual credit Freshman Composition, we developed a side-by-side research class in which our English teachers create a workshop environment for students to complete assignments and receive direct feedback before submission to college instructors. We responded to a need for increased achievement on TAKS with both a TAKS Science Review class and a section of Reading provided for students who had low Lexile scores.

We also create PGP's that define the best course for achievement based on individual strengths and needs. The teacher teams meet with their student and the parent to review performance in class, grades, and state/national test data to determine the best course of action for future success. Parents and students are coached toward positive actions in the home to support the collaborative plan. We use student achievement data to gauge college readiness, specifically requiring a 3.0 GPA or above to take college electives and passing standards on the Compass test administered by HCCS.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

Data is vital to our work and for the many communities we serve. In dealing with our parent/guardians we use a multitude of methods to communicate directly to them. Three-week progress reports and nine-week report cards are given to students directly, and report cards are also mailed home to the family. Individual reports for TAKS testing and nationally norm referenced Stanford-10 exams are mailed directly to the family with a memo providing instruction on how to read these scores. HISD has invested in an online

grade system which provides grades on student assignments, attendance, and overall averages in real time. In our school recruitment tours we educate families on our overall school data and what that will mean for them should they choose CECHS.

We review student data and educate parents on how to understand it during our Horizontal Team meetings. We provide them with the “Student Status Report” which includes a transcript of data beginning in the third grade. The student status report includes vital information such as Stanford and TAKS results each year, current and past course grades, demographics, and personalized graduation plans each year as needed.

We review these data points with our students in their Advisory classes as well as upon request. Students calculate their own GPA’s every nine week grading period to raise awareness of their own college readiness. The Ambassadors Club—service organization that promotes college and career readiness—goes into advisory each quarter to assist students in calculating grade point averages, credit accumulation, and graduation criteria. During our Town Hall meetings a review of overall school achievement and goals for the year instill a sense of team and community.

We post data points and reports on our school website and link to district and national partner websites that include data on our program. The School Profile includes an overview of attendance, student composition, staff composition, and achievement data.

4. Sharing Lessons Learned:

When created in 2003, CECHS was one of fifteen Early Colleges in the nation and the first in Texas. As a pioneer in the Early College Initiative, we have been privileged to share our story with a number of people, school districts, and college reform initiatives. The following is a timeline with brief descriptions of how we have shared our learning.

- 2003-current: Middle College National Consortium (MCNC)
 - Participate in summer conferences and in collaboration across the consortium (Principal serves on Executive Board)
 - Participate in Peer Review visit MCNC Coaches
 - Hosted MCNC Fall Technical Conference in 2008
 - Participate in annual student conference
- Summer 2005: Knowledge Works Foundation Early College Initiative
 - Administrative Team presented and acted as coaches for upcoming Early Colleges in Ohio
- 2005-2006: Texas Education Agency (TEA) Model School grant
 - More than fifty school districts and colleges visited CECHS
 - Professional development sessions about data, structures, and grants to assist upcoming Early Colleges in Texas
- 2006-2010:
 - CECHS continued to host Texas Early Colleges and district visits for planning sessions and tours
- 2007: TEA Best Practices Clearinghouse website
 - Recognized CECHS for work toward college readiness, specifically the use of “double-blocked” Algebra and English I classes at the ninth grade level
- 2007-2010: International Center for Leadership in Education
 - CECHS identified as one of its “Model Schools”
 - CECHS presented at conference, data shared with initiative and partners
- Summer 2007: North Carolina Small School Initiative

- o CECHS Principal provided presentation and coaching to Early Colleges
- 2008-2010: Texas Education Agency/Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board/Texas High School Project member school in tandem with Jobs For the Future
 - o Collaborative work with other Principals
 - o Two CECHS teachers identified as internal coaches and participated in learning opportunities to continue professional development at CECHS
- 2009-current: Gulf Coast Early College Consortium
 - o A founding member of this group established with Early Colleges in the greater Houston area
 - o Pre-service conference held with all instructional staffs
 - o Principals meet each semester
 - o Deans of Students meet one to two times per semester
 - o Peer school visits coordinated by content areas
- 2009-2010: Houston A+ Challenge
 - o Grant partnering CECHS and Quest HS sharing best practices, CECHS assisting with startup of Early College conversion with Quest guiding work on Senior Exhibition initiative at CECHS

1. Curriculum:

Although Challenge ECHS high school curriculum is aligned with the state-adopted Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and Houston ISD's CLEAR scope and sequence, it has been adapted to meet the academic needs of the early college student. With college-readiness as the overarching academic goal for all CECHS students, the core content areas follow a rigorous Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement curriculum to ensure success as students begin to enroll in college coursework in 10th grade.

Writing across the curriculum is a cornerstone of content delivery used as a tool to activate thinking, process new learning, and to demonstrate mastery. Students are required to take two writing electives in addition to four years of English to reinforce writing skills as foundational for college success.

Shared instructional strategies in all content areas have been refined over the years based on "best practices" for early college students. Development of specific content vocabulary is emphasized through the use of word walls or student created subject dictionaries. Note-taking techniques (Cornell) are a common practice with variations adopted to correlate with the subject area. For instance, two column-dialectic notes are used in English, Graphic organizers or outlines in Science, annotation and REAP charts in Social Studies.

Math is sequenced to meet the academic and individual needs of students at all levels. A diagnostic entry test is given to ninth graders to determine placement in double-block Algebra I, Pre-AP Geometry, or a combination of Algebra I for auditing and Pre-AP Geometry. Following Pre-AP Algebra II, students are enrolled in one of three levels: Pre-Calculus, dual credit Pre-Calculus, or Advanced Mathematics Decision Making which provides application-based mathematics. Teachers use common rubrics, shared warm-ups based on TEKS objectives, and require students to maintain portfolios.

English is an accelerated program offering Pre-AP English I, Pre-AP English II (with one pilot class of students who sit for the AP English Language exam), and a dual credit 1301-1302/AP English course for 11th graders who will take the AP English Literature exam. ELA vertical teaming focuses on scaffolding literature through the use of common language, practice, and classroom practices linked to the Common Instructional Framework Strategies of the Texas High School Project.

Social Studies AP coursework is offered in the following sequence: 9th grade, AP Human Geography; 10th grade, AP World History; 11th grade, dual credit US History at the community college; and finally dual credit Government and Economics which are delivered at the college. To adequately prepare the 11th graders for the TAKS EXIT exam, the social studies teachers provide Friday review sessions in the spring. Scaffolding, collaborative grouping, and researching strategies are used in preparing 9th and 10th graders to achieve success on the AP exam.

Science Pre-AP coursework is offered in the three science classes on the high school campus: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Students choose a fourth science at the college as dual credit to complete the high school science requirements. To prepare students for college science curriculum, teachers emphasize research writing and collaborative grouping.

Spanish is offered as a Pre-AP course (I, II, III) or as a course designed for native speakers. After 10th grade, students who are interested in pursuing additional language experience may enroll, if qualified, at HCC. More than 50% of students enrolled in Spanish on the high school side sat for the AP Spanish exam in 2010, with 80% scoring 3 or above for college credit. Instruction includes writing to learn strategies, collaborative grouping, Reader's Theatre, and Classroom Talk.

Theatre is offered as a fine arts credit and is one of the few extracurricular programs offered on the high school campus. The program provides an outlet for creative expression and is one of the stand-outs on our campus both in attracting students to the program and building community within. The theatre students have won numerous UIL awards, competing against 5 A schools in the district. Instruction is delivered within a collaborative setting with an emphasis on building self-discipline and responsibility.

Physical Education at CECHS is termed “life fitness” providing our students with the skills to carry into adulthood and maintain a healthy lifestyle. We have a fully equipped fitness center where students are trained in proper use of weights and machines. Soccer is the only extracurricular sport.

Health is designed to be both thorough and relevant to our students, covering those topics that the average teenager is most at risk of encountering (sexuality, obesity and drug use). Using research, real life stories, and group discussion, basic health skills such as refusal skills, decision-making skills, goal setting, effective communication skills, stress management, and anger management are addressed to help students deal with difficult daily issues.

2. Reading/English:

The ELA department uses tight vertical alignment and collaboration to construct a curriculum that supports students with intense scaffolding for close reading of literary and non-fiction texts. The curriculum, aligned with Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, emphasizes college preparation skills, such as building a strong base in context grammar; expository writing; vocabulary development through knowledge of stems, roots, prefixes and suffixes—which supports vocabulary study in the science courses—and high frequency words for AP and SAT and literary analysis; common strategies to build writing excellence across disciplines; and the promotion of skills conducive to an early transition between high school level work and college level work. With an emphasis on close reading strategies the students read for purpose as well as pleasure to seek and make relevant connections to instructional material. In partnership with the Texas High School Project, Challenge ECHS uses a common instructional framework of strategies across the disciplines.

Sixty-five percent of students who enter CECHS have not taken a Pre-AP class in middle school, but at CECHS they are expected to work at a Pre-AP level. To support learning, the ELA team’s approach to literature study includes a blanket of genres, including nonfiction and informational texts, fiction in all genres that include a broad range of works, including British (Shakespeare), American texts (Whitman, Fitzgerald, Steinbeck, Miller) to contemporary literature (Tim O’Brien, Toni Morrison, Cormac McCarthy).

Students are provided with clear paragraph and AP-style essay formats, assessment rubrics, and many examples of exemplary essay models to guide them in their own writing. A research writing class is specifically designed to instruct students with strategies to tackle college level writing assignments. Students learn to locate and evaluate sources, read, analyze, and summarize non-fiction texts, use correct MLA format and construct persuasive, well-written research papers. Students examine high quality professional texts and student examples as models for their own writing.

Specifically designed for our struggling or reluctant readers, we offer a Reading class to enhance reading enjoyment and skills as well as to build vocabulary. In addition, for seniors who need additional support in the college English classes that are used as credit for English IV, we provide a support class with an ELA teacher that assists them with analyzing high level readings and writing essays.

3. Mathematics:

At its core, the mathematics curriculum at Challenge ECHS is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which includes performance objectives for each Texas high school mathematics course (Algebra I, Pre-AP Algebra II, Pre-AP Geometry, Pre-Calculus and Advanced Mathematics

Decision Making). Beyond these basics, however, the goal of the mathematics department is to prepare students for a successful college experience. Because we are keenly aware of the discrepancy between what is needed for high school graduation and what is necessary for college success, student progress is monitored toward that end, and assistance is offered to students at all grade levels and in all classes who need additional help.

Before entering the ninth grade, students are given a diagnostic test to determine their strengths and weaknesses and to plan differentiation of instruction. Students who begin ninth grade with Algebra I credit are required to audit Algebra I if the diagnostic reveals that their algebra skills are not sufficient. All Algebra I classes are double-blocked, meeting 90 minutes each day, which gives students extended time to develop fundamental algebra skills. When needed we also double-block the ninth-grade Geometry class to strengthen algebra skills.

At all levels, TAKS, Stanford 10, and Compass results are analyzed to identify students in need of academic assistance. Support is offered in a variety of ways, such as required after-school tutorials, student-to-student tutoring during the school day, and Saturday tutorials tailored to students' needs as identified in the test data. Students who are taking dual credit math classes or college math classes also have access to tutoring offered at Houston Community College.

Because our mission is to prepare students for college success rather than merely for high school graduation we stress not just procedural competence, but conceptual understanding of the objectives. Therefore, our students must have a strong foundation in elementary number theory, or "number sense." To this end we are very judicious about the use of calculators in our classrooms, so that they are used as a powerful tool rather than as a crutch.

The math department actively engages in improving teaching practices with the ultimate goal of student success. As such, the math teachers have developed a common grading rubric as well as common objectives. They also have monthly discussions centered on research based texts, for example, "Teach Like a Champion," by Doug Lemov.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The mission of Challenge ECHS is to serve a population that is traditionally not college bound and to provide a level of rigor to prepare that population for success in college, both in the junior and senior years of high school, when students take classes at Houston Community College (HCC), and at four-year institutions after high school graduation. As one step toward elevating rigor, CECHS requires all students to be enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography at the 9th grade and AP World History at the 10th grade. These courses satisfy the state requirements for social studies and are both AP Course Audit approved. This requirement provides a level of academic intensity that challenges students to develop the academic skills and content knowledge that lead to success in the classroom, the AP exams, and in college courses. Houston ISD's AP Report for 2010 shows the district passing rate (a score of 3-5) for AP World History at 15.6%, while at CECHS it was 38.2%, an indication of the program's success. Instruction is based on state-approved AP level texts and includes primary and secondary sources, such as the Journal of Geography and The Economist, to further develop critical thinking, reading and analytical skills. Academic skills are reinforced through a variety of methods—Cornell notes, organizational tools such as agendas, and digital tools such as on line calendars and wikis that help students take ownership of and manage their education. Students display their content knowledge through a variety of products such as presentations, papers, graphic interpretations, skits, and objective tests. The social studies department also offers Economics and US History for those students who cannot take HCC courses. For any student enrolled in any social studies class, at least two days a week are dedicated to before school or after school tutoring. While this is mostly on a voluntary basis, when a student is identified as needing additional support, meetings will be called where all stake holders (parents, teachers, students and administrators) are present and tutoring can become mandatory. The social studies department offers an exit level TAKS

prep course on Fridays in the spring. Students are identified, pulled from elective classes and given 12 Fridays of small group preparation.

5. Instructional Methods:

The students of CECHS come from all over the city of Houston and from a variety of academic backgrounds--public, private, charter, and home school --with almost 45% considered to be At Risk. As a result there is great diversity in our students' skills, academic performance and behaviors. Students are not grouped by their abilities, but as a result of our 19:1 student-teacher ratio, teachers quickly learn the needs and abilities of their students.

School-wide we are committed to a number of instructional strategies to meet these diverse needs. Since the inception of CECHS there has been an emphasis on:

- helping students develop note-taking skills, particularly in Cornell note-taking system
- content vocabulary using such techniques as word walls and Spanish translation
- scaffolding objectives
- use of protocols

In the last few years, all teachers have incorporated into their classroom the Texas High School Project Instructional Framework:

- Collaborative group work
- Questioning
- Writing to learn
- Scaffolding
- Classroom talk
- Literacy group

Teachers use a rounds model of observing other teachers' classrooms to enhance instruction and use of the framework.

Heterogeneously grouped classes require teacher proficiency in differentiating instruction. Struggling students and those performing below grade level are provided support in all departments. The Science department supplements instruction with Sheltered Instructional Operating Protocol (SIOP) which generally targets ESL students. Math instruction is based on diagnostics given to incoming freshmen. All freshmen in Algebra I are double blocked, meeting for 90 minutes each day. The English department has two support classes for students needing additional assistance in reading and writing.

All teachers offer after school or morning tutorials at least twice a week for students needing additional instruction. Tutorials are also offered twice a week during school hours by our own National Honor Society members. Students in need of extra time to develop mastery also have online support available through the HISD APEX program (online credit recovery and supplemental support).

To address the needs of our more advanced students, the Math department also identifies those students places them on a self-paced program to qualify for college level math classes sooner. The English department offers an accelerated Pre-AP English II pilot class which prepares 10th grade students to sit for the AP language test, usually reserved for 11th graders. CECHS offers Pre-AP and AP curriculum in all core subject areas and dual credit coursework through the college.

6. Professional Development:

A parallel structure to the personalization of education for the CECHS student is the personalization of professional development for teachers and staff. Friday staff development is at the core of the collegial engagement that is fostered on campus. With a belief that we must take care of each other to take care of our students, Friday meetings have traditionally started with individual check-ins mirroring the student check-ins during Advisory. CECHS's professional development model focuses on building teacher efficacy by adopting effective research-based instructional strategies, building peer-to-peer observation procedures, and incorporating reflective self-assessments of teaching practices.

Since the initial opening of CECHS in 2003-04, an average of two hours per week during the academic year has been dedicated to whole faculty professional development training including text based discussions using National School Reform Faculty protocols, MCNC's peer review process, sharing "take-aways" from outside training, and department work examining practices and data. All teachers have participated in trainings with outside organizations including Houston ISD's Professional Development and Literacy Network, Middle College National Consortium, Houston A+ Challenge, and at the Rice University Advanced Placement Institute.

All core subject faculty received training in the Laying the Foundations Program, a three year program developed for Pre-AP curriculum to help teachers match the level of rigor expected in Advanced Placement classes. Eleven of our teachers became trained as Critical Friends Group coaches, contributing a culture of teacher-driven collaborative practice. Two of our teachers are instructional coaches with the Texas High School Project and lead the faculty in monthly sessions on using THSP's Common Instructional Framework.

As an early college faculty, the research of Dr. David Conely in both College Knowledge and Redesigning College Readiness has been used as a guide with teachers, students, and parents to inform and frame conversations and curriculum decisions around the rigor of instruction. Data examination has been emphasized through teacher training with Margaret Kilgo's TAKS Data in the Core Content Subject Areas.

Campus-wide literacy practices have been discussed, adapted and adopted to increase student achievement both in the high school and community college coursework. This includes note-taking strategies (Cornell notes, annotation, and graphic organizers), research writing, and the development of content and SAT vocabulary.

7. School Leadership:

The Challenge ECHS leadership philosophy is based on the Distributed Leadership model as defined by Richard Elmore of Harvard: regardless of role or predefined duties, leaders' work is rooted in instructional practice, understood collegial scrutiny, and modeling of appropriate actions at all times. These constructs enable shared leadership, shared ownership, shared knowledge, and shared responsibility by all stakeholders, and provide a flat administrative structure that allows for input by all stakeholders. The leadership structure at CECHS is comprised of several parts:

- Administrative Team includes the Principal, two Deans of Students, and one College Access Coordinator.
 - o Coordinates pre-service and on-going training of staff
 - o Facilitates meeting structures and protocols
 - o Provides continuous student and staff support while maintaining an open door policy
- Department Chairs
 - o Meet with the principal to determine professional development for the weekly staff meeting and discourse on departmental/school needs

- o Hold weekly departmental meetings during common planning times with their departments to disaggregate data, share best practices, and align curriculum standards
- Senior level students participate in a Leadership class
 - o Provide input in regard to school cultural needs
 - o Are trained to facilitate discussions and team-building exercises for Advisory classes
- Site-Based Decision Making Committee comprised of the principal, one para-professional, four teachers, and two parents
 - o Meet monthly to discuss school budgetary needs, school initiatives, and overall school data
- Collaborative partnerships with Houston A+ Challenge, Middle College National Consortium, and Texas High School Project
- Provide support and training for leaders in and out of the classroom.

With a focus on student achievement, CECHS has developed and borrowed structures from its institutional partners for peer-to-peer classroom observations. We use two observation models: the THSP Rounds Model, where teachers participate in a pre-conference, focused observation, and post-conference to discuss observations; and MCNC's Peer Review Process which allows for an in-depth look into what a teacher does in and out of the classroom based on observations by multiple staff members, reflections by the observed, and a formal learning session where the observed is asked about their part at CECHS by their observing colleagues. Additionally, the use of the Critical Friend's Group structure and protocols as provided by A+ enables collegial conversations around a multitude of school issues.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	86	82	83	79
Commended	20	14	19	20	14
Number of students tested	114	100	77	114	84
Percent of total students tested	100	99	97	99	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	97	87	80	83	70
Commended	21	13	12	20	11
Number of students tested	70	53	41	64	37
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	90	78	75	67	65
Commended	10	9	10	0	12
Number of students tested	30	23	20	21	17
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	97	84	86	88	77
Commended	24	9	17	23	3
Number of students tested	67	57	35	66	30
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	100	100	83	84	90
Commended	17	33	28	26	23
Number of students tested	12	18	18	19	30
NOTES:					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 10 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	99	97	93	98
Commended	34	32	11	10	22
Number of students tested	114	101	79	116	85
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	98	100	89	97
Commended	30	23	2	12	5
Number of students tested	71	53	43	65	38
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	90	94
Commended	47	22	5	5	18
Number of students tested	30	23	20	21	17
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	98	100	92	100
Commended	28	26	14	11	16
Number of students tested	67	57	35	66	31
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	100	100	90	95	97
Commended	33	58	15	14	33
Number of students tested	12	19	20	21	30
NOTES:					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 11 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	95	92	91
Commended	36	41	40	24	17
Number of students tested	89	71	91	76	54
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	100	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	93	94	88
Commended	37	36	31	12	22
Number of students tested	51	36	54	34	32
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	92	88
Commended	16	17	33	31	13
Number of students tested	19	18	12	13	16
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	100	94	90	92
Commended	34	41	33	7	20
Number of students tested	50	34	51	29	25
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	100	100	94	93	90
Commended	61	60	56	38	10
Number of students tested	18	15	18	29	10
NOTES: Please note that the number of 11th grade students tested differs from the number enrolled. This is due to the recoding of 4th year students who have declared to stay a 5th year as 11th graders. Since they have already taken the tests in their "proper" 11th grade year, they do not test.					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 11 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	98
Commended	57	41	27	46	39
Number of students tested	88	71	90	79	54
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	100	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	48	34	21	40	39
Number of students tested	50	35	53	35	31
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	97
Commended	58	41	33	54	25
Number of students tested	19	17	12	13	16
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	45	32	16	31	40
Number of students tested	49	34	50	29	25
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	100	100	100	100	100
Commended	89	56	50	53	40
Number of students tested	18	16	18	32	10
NOTES: Please note that the number of 11th grade students tested differs from the number enrolled. This is due to the recoding of 4th year students who have declared to stay a 5th year as 11th graders. Since they have already taken the tests in their "proper" 11th grade year, they do not test.					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 9 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educating

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	93	91	88	77	88
Commended	48	34	24	14	16
Number of students tested	111	107	118	91	115
Percent of total students tested	98	96	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	91	93	90	69	87
Commended	46	34	21	6	16
Number of students tested	78	67	67	48	69
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	92	85	89	76	74
Commended	31	26	14	10	13
Number of students tested	13	27	28	21	23
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	92	90	85	71	90
Commended	51	35	21	10	16
Number of students tested	77	63	68	49	63
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	92	100	95	89	100
Commended	46	46	45	21	14
Number of students tested	13	13	20	19	21
NOTES:					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 9 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 2005 Publisher: Pearson Educated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	99	99	97	97	99
Commended	26	20	44	34	17
Number of students tested	112	111	118	94	115
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	99	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	99	99	96	94	69
Commended	23	17	36	26	14
Number of students tested	78	69	67	50	69
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	96	100	100
Commended	23	25	50	35	13
Number of students tested	13	28	28	23	23
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	99	98	97	94	98
Commended	26	15	31	31	11
Number of students tested	77	65	68	48	63
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	100	100	95	100	100
Commended	36	21	80	40	38
Number of students tested	14	14	20	20	21
NOTES:					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	91	88	84	87
Commended	34	29	28	19	16
Number of students tested	314	278	286	281	253
Percent of total students tested	99	98	98	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	95	92	88	81	85
Commended	35	23	22	14	18
Number of students tested	199	156	162	146	138
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	94	87	87	76	82
Commended	16	28	17	11	14
Number of students tested	62	68	60	55	56
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	96	90	88	83	87
Commended	37	23	24	15	14
Number of students tested	194	154	154	144	118
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	98	99	91	90	95
Commended	44	48	43	30	20
Number of students tested	43	46	56	67	61
NOTES:					

11TX15

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	99	99	98	96	99
Commended	38	29	30	28	24
Number of students tested	314	283	287	289	254
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	99	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Met Standard	99	99	98	93	99
Commended	32	23	22	23	18
Number of students tested	199	157	163	150	138
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	99	99	98	96	98
Commended	45	28	32	28	18
Number of students tested	62	68	60	57	56
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	99	99	99	94	99
Commended	32	23	22	22	19
Number of students tested	193	156	153	135	119
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. White					
Met Standard	99	99	95	99	98
Commended	57	48	48	38	38
Number of students tested	44	49	58	73	61
NOTES:					

11TX15